

2.3 LAND USE

This section describes existing and future land uses in the Central Arizona Regional Framework Study area. Comprehensive mapping of existing and future land uses in the study area is not readily available and land use plans are subject to frequent change. Current land use plans for individual jurisdictions should be reviewed and considered in evaluating specific transportation improvements.

2.3.1 Existing Land Use

The following subsections describe land uses and major activity centers in the study area. Activity centers are described in relation to the principal transportation corridors.

Pinal County

A significant portion of Pinal County is Arizona State Trust Land. With much of the land currently in reserve for State Trust, or under protective regulations, much of Pinal County is generally very rural. There are, however, developed incorporated areas, including the communities of Apache Junction, Superior, Kearny, Mammoth, Coolidge, Florence, Eloy; unincorporated areas of Oracle and Claypool/Copper Hills; and Master Planned Communities of Saddlebrooke and Merrill Ranch and Johnson Ranch--in the study area that support a wider range of land uses, from low intensity industrial to low-density residential. Even though many of these areas are at least partially developed, many are still fairly rural in character, with predominantly low densities and commercial land uses. There is also a large amount of privately owned land in the western portion of the county, between the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Gila River Indian Community. A portion of this area lies within the city of Casa Grande.

The seven incorporated jurisdictions and other activity centers in the study area have largely developed around major transportation corridors. These major transportation corridors include SR 77, SR 79, US 60, SR 87, SR 287, and I-10.

SR 79 Corridor:

Florence

The SR 79 corridor passes through Florence, giving the town a commercial core and commercial land uses along the highway. Most of the areas outside the town core or those abutting the highway are low- to medium-density residential. SR79B passes through the Florence. Commercial development exists around the corridor. The Town Core consists of mostly low-density residential, with exception around SR 79B, and professional offices. McFarland State Park is located within the Town Core. The Town Core also has a Historic District with over 150 buildings on the Historic Register, including land marks such as the 1891 Pinal County Courthouse and Silver King Hotel. The Arizona Department of Corrections is the principal employer in the Florence area. Florence is also the county seat.

Florence National Guard Target Range

The Florence Military Reservation (FMR) is managed by the Arizona Army National Guard in cooperation with other state and federal agencies. The Reservation encompasses artillery and small-arms training ranges. It is the main training site for the Arizona Army National Guard. A multiple use policy allows for other activities in addition to military training, including cattle grazing, hunting, camping, birding, and other outdoor recreation.

SR 77 Corridor:

Oracle

Oracle is a small, unincorporated community about 30 miles north of Tucson. Most of the development is low-density residential, with limited commercial uses. There are no major employers in the community, and it shares most facilities with Mammoth and San Manuel. The community is bordered by Oracle State Park to the east and Coronado National Forest to the south, which limits growth in those directions.

SaddleBrooke

SaddleBrooke is a master-planned retirement community located about 20 miles north of Tucson. Along with residential, the community has a mixture of shopping and light commercial uses (shopping, restaurants, banks, offices, etc.).

Town of Mammoth

Mammoth was historically a mining town, but has shifted toward the service and tourism industries. SR 77 bisects the town, and most of the commercial uses have clustered around the state route. Mammoth is predominately residential away from SR 77.

Winkelman/Hayden/Kearny

These three small towns were all historically mining towns. Today they share many community facilities. Most of the commercial uses are located along SR 77 and SR 177, with residential uses farther from the state highways.

SR 87/SR 287 Corridor:

Coolidge

SR 87/SR 287 bisects Coolidge and is lined with commercial uses. SR 287 also passes through Florence. The most intense commercial development is located between Martin Road and the SR 87/SR 287 intersection in the northern part of Coolidge. To the east and west of SR 87 is mostly low- to medium-density residential development.

Hunt Highway Corridor:

Hunt Highway Corridor

Hunt Highway runs in a generally southeast to northwest direction through northern Pinal County, extending from Florence to Queen Creek. The Hunt Highway corridor is characterized by rapid development, primarily residential but with several neighborhood commercial nodes. Several large master-planned communities, such as Merrill Ranch and Johnson Ranch, have been constructed along this corridor.

Merrill Ranch

Anthem at Merrill Ranch is a master-planned community located off of Hunt Highway in Florence. This master-planned community is 5,800 acres featuring mixed use development with a wide range of residential housing types and areas reserved for commercial and industrial uses. Residential uses will use 3,284 acres of the development and commercial/industrial/mixed uses will use 1,274 acres. This master-planned community is expected to ultimately include 26,109 dwelling units.

Johnson Ranch

Johnson Ranch is a 2,000-acre master-planned community located at the intersection of Hunt Highway and Bella Vista Road, five miles east of Ellsworth Road. The master-planned

community surrounds an 18-hole golf course and features a number of housing options, plus retail stores.

Queen Creek

The Town of Queen Creek is composed mostly of low-density residential uses. The majority of the low-density residential development is located in the southern portion of the town. North of Riggs Road, however, there are higher densities and more commercial uses. The town center is located along Rittenhouse Road. Along Hunt Highway, land uses are very low-density residential and recreation/conservation uses. The land uses along Ironwood Road are a mixture of very low, low, and medium residential densities.

Apache Junction

Apache Junction has seen a significant increase in commercial and residential development in the past several years, as the Phoenix metropolitan area continues to expand. Most commercial uses are located along US 60 and the Old West Highway. There are also some commercial nodes along Apache Trail. The rest of the city consists primarily of low- and medium-density residential.

I-10 Corridor:

Marana

The developed portion of the I-10 corridor in Marana contains mostly industrial and commercial uses. On the west side of the corridor are some agricultural uses that have existed since early settlement. Lower residential densities and other commercial areas are located in the town center. Recent growth is characterized by master-planned communities spread across the northeastern, northwestern, and southern parts of the town.

Eloy

Commercial areas are located near the I-10 corridor. Low- to medium-density residential areas are located farther from I-10. In November 2007, Eloy had its kick-off meeting for the new general plan. This plan will highlight the areas that will become employment centers for the region.

Gila River Indian Community

The land use within the Gila River Indian Community along I-10 is predominantly agricultural with a few industrial uses. There is also the Gila Indian Center, which has shops and a museum.

US 60 Corridor:

Superior

Superior is located on US 60 at the junction of SR 177. Major employment sectors include mining, trade and service. Superior contains a 46-acre industrial park north of US 60.

Gila County

Gila County is characterized by rural, low-density development. Commercial land uses, other non-residential uses, and higher-density residential areas are generally located near existing development or along highways and primary transportation corridors.

The unincorporated area surrounding Miami and Globe is known as the Claypool/Copper Hills area. The majority of the existing land use in this area is heavy industrial, with many

copper mines and smelting operations. The area is rich in minerals, but as a result has limited areas suitable for development. Due to unstable soils or environmental issues, development has been discouraged near the mines. There is generally dispersed, low-density development in the areas between the mines, Miami and Globe.

The southern portion of Gila County that lies within the study area, including Hayden and Winkelman, is also very low-density. Much of the land in this area is owned by the Bureau of Land Management, the State of Arizona (State Trust Land), or mining entities. Most of the non-residential land uses are located along the primary transportation corridors. Along the periphery of Hayden and Winkelman heavy industrial uses are allowed.

Globe

Globe is the seat of Gila County and contains support businesses and housing that serve the mining industry. There are numerous historic building in downtown Globe and the area supports a local tourism industry.

Miami

Miami's old downtown has been partly renovated, and many buildings in the downtown area are on the historic register. A number of antique shops have developed in historic buildings on US 60. The majority of the historic district is located on Sullivan Street, one block north of US 60.

2.3.2 Future Land Use

This section describes, at a very high level, planned future land use within the study Central Arizona Regional Framework Study area. Future land use descriptions are largely based on information obtained from the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG), and from stakeholder interviews and input, and information obtained from the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan Update study team.

Pinal County Comprehensive Plan Update

An update to the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan is currently underway. Based on an extensive visioning process involving over 1,000 persons, three land use and transportation alternatives were developed and presented to the public in six workshops held in February 2008. Based on feedback from the workshops, a preferred alternative has emerged, which is the corridor-focused development alternative. This alternative concentrates larger, mixed-use economic and residential development activities, and encourages multimodal transportation alternatives along major transportation routes. This alternative also reflects the recently adopted Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan. Key features of the preferred alternative are:

- Concentrates high-intensity residential and economic development patterns that create jobs in central Pinal County, allowing for low-intensity development elsewhere.
- Identifies additional economic centers connected with efficient transportation options.
- Provides a commuter rail route through central Pinal County, connecting Phoenix and Tucson. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connections would also be provided.
- Employs the Pinal County Vision, developed from earlier public input.